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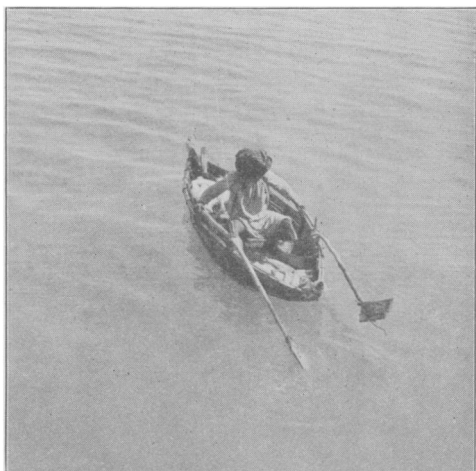
BRIEFER ARTICLES.

A DATE-LEAF BOAT OF ARABIA.

(WITH THREE TEXT FIGURES)

WHILE traveling up the coast of Arabia last February the writer's attention was attracted to some curious craft made entirely of date leaves that came alongside as the "Pemba" steamed into the desert harbor of Jask on the Arabian coast. The coast of the Persian gulf is so barren that one can travel for many days along it without finding so much as a single tree or shrub, and at this place the only plants of any size were some groves of date palms and a few acacias which had been planted by the English employees of the Persian gulf cable company, which has a station at Jask.

Wood is so scarce in the region that even the roots of such small desert shrubs as are to be found are dug up for fuel, and timber large enough for boat building would have to be brought by water from Bombay. It is necessity, therefore, which has invented these curious date boats of Jask. They are made of the midribs of the date palm leaves, which are about an inch and a half in diameter and ten feet long. These tough midribs, from which the leaflets have been removed, are fastened together by means of wooden pegs and strong twine in the form of a boat. No attempt is made to match joints, but a false bottom is built to the craft, and the mass of light midribs that lie beneath this bottom buoy the boat up out of the water so that the inside remains quite dry.



Though in the form of a boat, this curious date-leaf affair is really a boat-shaped raft, for nothing but the fact that the bottom stands high out of the water prevents the waves from entering and flooding it.

They are not pitched or painted in any way, and would doubtless



be short-lived were they not dried out carefully on the beach whenever the owner is not using them. The paddles are the only parts of the boat which are not made of the date palm, being crooked, irregular



poles with the sides of some dry goods box for blades. They indicate the remarkable dearth of wood in the region.

They are weird little craft, and add one more use to the list of things which can be made from this remarkable desert palm.—DAVID G. FAIRCHILD, *Agricultural Explorer, U. S. Department of Agriculture.*

A VARIABLE LARKSPUR.

THE genus *Delphinium*, both in the Rocky mountains and in California, runs into numerous local races or species. Formerly these were classified under a few specific names, but this method had the unfortunate result of grouping together without distinction very diverse plants. Now we are going to the opposite extreme, and the list of species is becoming very long. In all probability we shall eventually come to regard the majority of the distinguishable forms as subspecies or races only ; but for the present the chief aim is to separate the different plants, whether or not we can reach final conclusions regarding their status. Whatever the nomenclatural outcome, there will evidently be much to interest the student of evolution.

In the Sapello cañon, Las Vegas range, New Mexico, a peculiar and variable *Delphinium* is very abundant. The writer in 1900 described it as a new species, but the description was not immediately published, and presently many new species were recorded from Colorado and elsewhere, so that the subject became complicated. The plant was clearly related to *D. occidentale*, and it seemed possible that it might be a southern form of *D. multiflorum* Rydberg 1902. I sent specimens representing the variations to Professor Aven Nelson, who has an intimate field knowledge of the Rocky mountain larkspurs, and he fails to recognize the plant, remarking that it is "certainly a fine species." He also agrees with me that the specimens sent are all of one species. Under these circumstances it seems desirable to publish a description.

***Delphinium sapellonis*, n. sp.**—Strict, up to six feet high : leaves tripartite, the lateral divisions large, and themselves almost tripartite : flowers very dull-colored : spurs obliquely ascending, slightly curved downwards, dark purple above, green below, varying to all pale with a dark purple line above : sepals brownish or greenish-white, veined with purple : anthers with an indigo-blue longitudinal band : lower petals purple, with their apical lobes pale, with light yellow hairs : pods with a short but rather dense glandular pubescence : upper part